



Thirty-four years later and still no ROTC at Harvard.

Fallout from the Vietnam War continues at some schools, but there may be a change in the air. See page 10.

'Wrong is wrong'

Extended fight with developer over proposed bridge has cost neighborhood \$70,000

**By Greg Densmore
Editor**

It's cost them more than \$70,000 in legal bills and five years of worry and exasperation, but a group of Candlelight Estates neighbors continue their fight to stop a developer from building a bridge over a flood control ditch at the end of Rosslyn Road.

The developer, Tom Shepherd, wants the bridge built in order to link Rosslyn to a proposed subdivision of up to 150 homes between Pinemont and Bethlehem.

Calling themselves Citizens for Community Involved Development, area residents are concerned that the bridge, if built, would negatively affect the subdivision through traffic congestion, a loss of green space, flooding, noise and air pollution and generally destroy a peaceful neighborhood.

"No neighborhood should have to be sacrificed for another neighborhood," said District A Councilwoman Toni Lawrence, a supporter of those who are fighting the bridge.

Last Tuesday, May 17, a crowd of more than 100 people, many sporting "No Bridge" badges and whose ranks included Lawrence and other city officials, gathered at the home of Ray Bush on Bethlehem and Rosslyn to get an update and learn what they could do to help.

Several people spoke to the gathering, including Sarah Shah-Eng, who alluded to the mishandling of the bridge issue by the City of Houston's legal department.

"They allowed Tom Shepherd to get land-locked and make it where a bridge over the bayou is his only solution," said Shah-Eng.

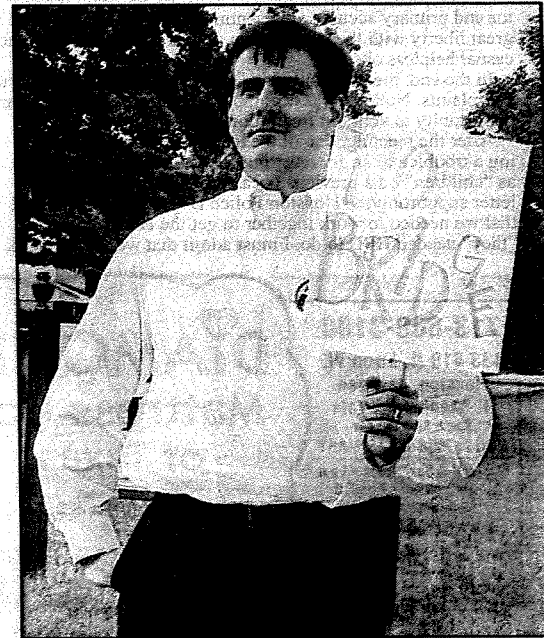
She also touched on the increase in traffic the bridge would bring to the neighborhood. "I've heard numbers like 1,000 more cars every day out here," said Shah-Eng. "We really don't want this street to become a major

thoroughfare."

The rally's host, Bush, updated the crowd on the history of the bridge issue, explaining that at one time, more than 3,200 people had signed a petition asking that the city reject the bridge proposal.

"And we spent \$70,000 of our hard-earned money fighting this in court," he said.

Past decisions of the city's
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Noah Denson makes his feelings known prior to a community rally protesting plans to build a bridge at the end of Rosslyn Road in the Candlelight Estates subdivision

Photo by Greg Densmore

Neighborhood opposes developers' bridge

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planning and legal departments, "based on questionable or illegal actions," have supported the developer, said Bush.

"The city violated its own rules," he said.

According to a fact sheet distributed by the CCID, the city of Houston has taken the following missteps regarding the bridge.

- The neighborhood was denied a variance based on additional traffic after the same variance was granted to the Ella Lee Forest subdivision.
- The city approved an illegal bridge design; Harris County Flood Control did not review the plans, and there were no alternate traffic studies and no public meetings.
- The city allowed the developer to artificially land-lock himself into a bridge.
- The city allowed a variance based on economic reasons alone, which is against the planning department's own rules.
- The city ignored the planning department's own reports that primary access already exists from Pinemont.

Bush then reviewed the expensive legal fight over the bridge.

"We've gone to court three times and we've won three times," he said. "First, the city's legal department said the neighborhood did not have grounds for a lawsuit. The court sided with the neighborhood. Second, the city sided with the neighborhood that it was an illegal bridge. And third, the developer sued the neighborhood for loss of income and the court ruled it

was a frivolous lawsuit."

Jack McReynolds, one of those sued by Shepherd, blasted the city's legal department for "opinions that are detrimental to neighborhood."

"We've won, but it's expensive to do so," he said. "We were sued for \$500,000 and that scared a few off — and I don't blame them. Right now, nothing is pending in court."

Charles Ingram, an Acres Home resident who lives north of the planned bridge, addressed the crowd to give his support to their fight.

"The people don't want the bridge. It's not about black or white. It's all about neighborhoods. That's why we're here," Ingram said. "The fight that you are fighting is a neighborhood fight. Continue on. You have our support across the bridge over there."

Bernie Brown, a representative of Timbergrove Manor, also spoke to the group.

"We would also be affected (by the bridge), as you will be," said Brown. "When you open up development that is singularly beneficial to one or a few people, but wholly detrimental to a substantial number of people, that's an imbalance. Get tough and hold your government accountable."

Lawrence told the residents to keep fighting because the battle over the bridge is not over.

"Wrong is wrong," she said. "This bridge, for monetary reasons, will change this neighborhood and that is wrong. This is not through, by any means. We're not going to give up, so you don't ever give up."

Lawrence said she has discussed the issue with Mayor Bill White, and that the mayor made a surprise visit to the neighborhood earlier in the week.

"He's looking into it. This mayor has said that neighborhoods are important. Write

to the mayor," she told the crowd. "It can make a difference. He's very responsive. He reads his own mail. He reads his E-mails. He wants to do what's right, and putting a bridge across Rosslyn is not right."